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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

memories are often very vivid. Those of slaughter-house work are calculated to convert to vegetarianism.

Ron keeps thinking of his gun and fingering it. Gradually a pattern emerges. Ron admired and loved a war cobbler called Mick, who was everything Ron was not. Brooding on Mick's death and the lot of stay-at-homes, fills Ron with hate. "Love makes the world go round," he muses, "but hate oils the wheels." Especially he hates one Wilkinson who has prospered and married a girl Ron had loved. So he looks for Wilkinson to shoot him. He will be in the crowd at the Ranfurly Shield game. When Ron discovers Wilkinson leading Canterbury, he dreams of himself immortalised in Rugby history as the man who shot the Canterbury captain. A football fan will particularly appreciate the way in which this situation is resolved.

After the evening reunion, which is excellently done with its breezy camaraderie, the distraught Ron nearly pulls the trigger. Then, in the quiet of a friend's home, the denouement comes, like the surprise at the end of a conventional thriller. Ron reveals to the reader, and releases within himself, the real core of the mystery.

Gordon Slater has an acutely observant eye and a rich vocabulary. Despite the narrator's bitterness against his country, which is apt to become a snarl, the book presents authentic pictures of our life in this coming-of-age time. Among the conventions we have shed is politeness in literature. The dialogue here is characteristic, especially the uninhibited shirt-sleeve speech of the male, in native idiom. The book's weakness is that it lacks a strong and visible continuous backbone. The tale is too long and the breaks too confusing. Hate can clog the wheels. But Gordon Slater has written a notable book.

—A.M.

THE MISSING SYMPHONY

THE SYMPHONIES OF SIBELIUS, by Simon Parmet, translated by Kingsley A. Hart, Cassell, English price 21/-.

SIBELIUS was a legend in his lifetime. It is over forty years since the first biography appeared. He died at the age of nearly 92 in 1957. He wrote some appallingly banal works, as well as some of the most austere grand music this generation has heard. He published practically nothing after 1926.

Did he ever write, or finish, the eighth symphony? If so, where is it? The composer himself wrote, as far back as 1945: "My eighth symphony has been completed many times over, but I am still not satisfied." Why did his brother-in-law, the composer and conductor Armas Jarnefelt, say two days after Sibelius's death that the symphony was finished and was to have posthumous publication, and then next day say "The eighth symphony does not exist"? This is the question with which Simon Parmet concludes his analysis of the symphonic writings of Jean Sibelius.

Parmet is a compatriot of the great Finnish composer, and he tells us that

his book grew out of Sibelius's request that Parmet undertake a corrected, definitive edition of the Symphonies. Discussions with the composer led to analyses, interpretation of tempi and expression marks, consideration of form and orchestration, and above all an appreciation of that intangible thing, the composer's intention. The material so collected needed only to be written down to form a most intimate and authoritative essay on the subject.

Though Sibelius asked Parmet to proceed with the book, he did not always assist the project. An inveterate aversion to the dissection of living music, and a hatred of appearing "naked among my fellow human beings," made Sibelius an elusive helper. But Parmet has produced a book which will take its place as the authoritative work on the Sibelius symphonies. He gives a chapter to a symphony, prefacing each analysis with an essay on some aspect of the composer's work as illustrated by the symphony under discussion: his nationalism, his reaction to new techniques, his forging of a form to express his increasing terseness of utterance.

The book is copiously illustrated with music extracts. Parmet has a penchant for setting out his material in two or three lines; the original, a comparable theme, a "germ thought"; or a line from a symphony, with a "reconstruction" under it, i.e. Parmet's interpretation of how it feels to him. Mostly these are illuminating, but there are times when one feels like doing what he tells us Sibelius did when Parmet stressed a point too strongly—change the subject.

My review copy suffered from having one unprinted sheet, resulting in eight blank pages.

—G.D.

LATE IN THE MORNING

THE ART OF LIVING: FOUR EIGHTEENTH CENTURY MINDS, by F. L. Lucas; Cassell, English price 25/-.

MR LUCAS has a great stock of apt quotations and the unexceptionable idea that the 20th century is out of its mind. Thus armed, he applies himself to the lives of four 18th century characters—Hume, Horace Walpole, Burke, and Benjamin Franklin—and tries to show in each case how successfully passion was restrained and guided by reason. The aim is to learn from the 18th century a lesson in self-control. For those who like their historical figures lined up in pedagogical parade, the book may be attractive. It will also impress some with its smooth style. But if you judge a book by its originality and penetration into character, the present volume will not rate highly.

Burke, we are told, was at his best on the American Revolution, at his worst defending Marie Antoinette. In his less restrained moments he was pedantic, romantic, and a mad Irishman. Hume struck a fine balance between life and logic. He was neither passionate nor religious and managed to die unrepentant, with a smile on his lips. In the author's inscrutable phrase, he was "extremely eighteenth-century." Franklin is an example of the man of affairs who does not let his heart run away with his head. All this does not leave much room for controversy. And if the

casual reader thinks the chapter on Walpole a trifle favourable compared with Macaulay, he might be reminded that Walpole's two latest biographers—Lucas and Ketton-Cremer—have been just as sympathetic. This book, in conjunction with an earlier volume on Johnson, Boswell, Chesterfield and Goldsmith, provides a useful introduction to the age of reason. But you have to get up very early in the morning these days to write something new and telling on the 18th century. By modern academic standards, Mr Lucas is a rather late riser.

—Alexander MacLeod

THE CULT OF DANGER

A SUMMER GONE, by Henry Klier, translated by James Kirkup; Geoffrey Bles, English price 16/-. PUEBLO, by Michel-Droit, translated by Edward Hyams; Eyre & Spottiswoode, English price 16/-.

SINCE the war, the cult of danger in mountaineering—exemplified by such ascents in the thirties as the north faces of the Grand Jorasses and the Matterhorn—had to all appearances gone out of fashion. It is interesting then to come across it again, expressed fictionally in this novel by Henry Klier, a well-known Austrian climber. Here again is the basic desperate unease, the Wagnerian *liebestod* on the mountain (the Matterhorn north face), the philosophic conviction expressed that unhappiness can only be resolved by violent or hazardous action. But the reality—and this is what gives this book its all-pervasive sadness—never parallels the heroic dream; and the hero who has made a mess of all his personal relationships in pursuit of the chimera, stands stupidly over the abyss longing "for a little patch of level ground, and a mouthful of tea."

One should be far more moved by the plight of Michel-Droit's unhappy Indian, who, far less sophisticated, wants little out of life. The only reason one isn't is because the author has wasted some fine writing and characterisation on an improbable plot. Paco, the Pueblo Indian, and his problems, are made the subject of keen sociological comment, but to make Paco's sister an ex-Los Alamos atomic scientist who has gone native again because of moral disapproval of the bomb, is an improbability from which the book does not recover. Yet Michel-Droit can write; he has looked hard at the Mexican landscape and people, and here they are—black shadow, fierce sunshine and exploding colours, all framing the fatalism of centuries.

—R.A.K.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COME NORTH WITH ME, by Bernt Balchen; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 21/-. The autobiography of the man whose pioneering flights included piloting Byrd on his first visit to the South Pole, this book includes also portraits of other aviator-explorers. There are many fine illustrations.

MIDDLE AGE, by Leslie J. Tizard and Harry J. S. Guntrip; Allen and Unwin, English price 10/6. Begun by the late Tizard and completed by his friend Harry Guntrip, this sequel and complement to Mr Tizard's *Guide to Marriage* is intended as a guide to those over 40.

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